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1961/06/08

Dominican Republic

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Dr. Mtg. w/ President

June 8, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. MC GEORGE BUNDY

FROM: Dick Goodwin

RE: June 7 meeting at the White House Mansion

Present at the meeting were: The President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Vice President Johnson, Attorney General Kennedy, Allen Dulles, General Lemnitzer, Admiral Burke, Alexis Johnson, Wym Coerr, Henry Dearborn, Arthur Schlesinger, and Richard Goodwin.

1. The Dominican Republic.

Alexis Johnson gave a brief review of the current Dominican situation. He pointed out that the OAS inspection team had gone with the mandate to inspect and come back with a recommendation whether current sanctions against the Dominican Republic should be lifted, retained or strengthened. He told of Dearborn's conversation with Bolaguer (fully reported in cables). He pointed out that Bill Pawley had talked with Trujillo's daughter prior to her departure for the Dominican Republic and she had since communicated that Ramfis, et al., wanted to move toward a more moderate form of government.

Dean Rusk added that Porfirio Rubirosa had talked to Murphy and told him that Ramfis desired to stay on a little while and help move the country toward Democratic government; that he then intended to leave the country, having no great desire to live in the Dominican Republic. Ramfis is also reported to have suggested his willingness to grant an amnesty to current political prisoners.

Dearborn, reinforced by a few others, said that these promises, e.g., free elections, amnesties, even the firing of Abbes, were the same moves that Trujillo had always made without any intended impact on the structure of his regime.

The President asked what our immediate goals in the Dominican Republic were.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLK-94-14
By NARA, Date 7/13/96

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Alexis Johnson replied that we would like an immediate move toward dissolution of the secret police -- the principal instrument of coercion.

In response to another Presidential question Dearborn indicated that he felt it would be possible to have a Democratic regime in the Dominican Republic without a communist takeover -- that pro-Democratic, pro-United States forces were present and could run a government. He told of Radio Caribe -- run by Ramfis, Abbes et. al. -- which has taken a strong anti-United States and a moderate pro-Soviet line over the past several months. This instrument had been one of the most dangerous in promoting a pro-communist viewpoint in the island.

Bob Kennedy expressed the view that we should give the current regime a chance to do what they promised to do; that it was worth our while to wait out the situation.

It was pointed out that anything we did should be in concert with Venezuela, that we would do ourselves great harm if we appeared to be making a deal with Ramfis without consultation and concurrence by our Caribbean Allies, and perhaps by the OAS itself.

The President said that we wanted a Democratic regime in the Dominican Republic; failing that we would prefer a friendly dictatorship, and the last thing we wanted was a Castro type regime.

Dearborn said that our goal over six months should be a situation in which Democratic pro-United States forces were not afraid to organize a party, speak in public places, etc.

Decisions: It was decided (a) that all our contacts would be informal ones through Murphy and Alexis Johnson should remain in contact with Murphy; (b) that we would have no contacts through Pawley -- that if he carried out his plans to go to the Dominican Republic we would be glad to hear his reports but he was in no way to involve State, CIA, the White House, etc., i.e. not to indicate that we approved what he said or authorized his visit. Secretary Rusk was detailed to communicate this to Pawley; (c) our military forces would remain in their current state of readiness for a few days at least -- no decision was made as to when they should lift the current alert status; (d) we would re-examine the situation in a week or two and see where we are.

2. Angola.

The President said there was no doubt how we would have to vote; but we should do it quietly, without speeches, and do all possible to develop a friendly relationship with the Portuguese, attempting to get some understanding of our position, in the period before the vote.

3. Laos.

The President made it clear that he did not want the conference to break up easily, or over a minor matter. In particular it should not break up over current MEO shelling. It was too early to draw conclusions since it is possible that results of the Vienna meeting not yet communicated to the forces on the ground in Laos. Gromyko would be in Geneva on Friday, and this will give us first real indication of results from Vienna. Until then we should keep our shirts on with the exception of protesting action of shelling, etc. This should be communicated to Harriman along with a full report of what had been said at Vienna on this subject.

4. China.

It was decided by the President to go ahead and issue export licenses for the equipment which Norwegian ships need to land Canadian wheat in China. This should be done quietly, and treated as a routine matter by Treasury. This course was recommended by Rusk and Dillon because (a) failure to do so would antagonize Canadians and Norwegians (b) these materials were not on the strategic list, (c) the equipment could be procured from European suppliers within six weeks (d) it was not clear that we ought to be involved in halting wheat shipments to areas of famine. The only consideration advanced on the other side was the danger of Congressional objection.

5. Foreign Aid Administration.

The President decided that Vice President Johnson should assume responsibility for asking a selected group of business leaders to furnish top management talent for the foreign aid administration. This was suggested by the Vice President because of congressional distrust of aid management; and the fear that such congressional distrust might endanger the enactment of the program. We should, therefore, the Vice President suggested, ask business leaders to donate top talent for 18 months or more for the business of managing aid here and in the field. This might give us some good people, and

would help assuage congressional fears. McNamara pointed out that most businessmen could not do this job, but there were some very good people who could give real help. The Secretary will discuss this with ICA to find out what sort of spots might be available for such a businessman peace corps, whereupon the Vice President and McNamara will draw up a list of invitees to a White House meeting to make the request.

6. Aid to Latin America.

The President instructed the Secretary to look into the possibility of replacing Robert Cutler as the American director on the Inter-American Bank -- sending Cutler off as an ambassador. He feels the need for some sort of check on the spending of all this money -- especially the type of check which would inspire confidence in Congress. Rusk will look around for a qualified replacement. It was also suggested that we might set up a three-man watchdog group to look at aid expenditures in Latin America. This was not followed by a definite decision.

7. Berlin.

The President instructed Defense to find out just how many military dependents we had in Berlin. He also said that present three-month food reserves for military in Berlin should be increased in a manner that would not reveal any rapid increase, i.e., slowly and over a period of time. Rusk pointed out that all aspects of the Berlin situation were being reviewed.

8. Nuclear Tests.

The President said it was essential to build up world public opinion preparatory to an end to the negotiations and possible test resumption. He pointed out that all the propaganda advantages were with the Russians who could say that all they wanted to do was continue talking. Bowles was instructed to talk to Murrow and Galbraith on ways to build up world opinion this summer -- to show Soviet unwillingness to agree, etc.

9. U.A.R.

The President said that our new Ambassador to UAR should talk to the Vice President and Fulbright before going over; that he should indicate to Nasser our desire to be friendly; that even though we disagreed on some points we had many interests in common. The Ambassador should also communicate Khrushchev's hostile references to UAR in Geneva talks (Bundy to supply these to the Secretary) and tell Nasser that we had persuaded the Israelis to agree to a West European neutral inspector of reactor. This last was an indication of our good will, etc.

The reason for seeing Fulbright is the fondness of the Arabs for him.